The Centre is located in Gurgaon. The objectives of the Centre are to promote overseas Indian investments into India, establish and maintain a Diaspora Knowledge Network (DKN), function as a clearing house for all investment related information, assist States in India to project investment opportunities to overseas Indians in the infrastructure and social sectors and to provide a host of advisory services to Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and non Resident Indians (NRIs) on matters such as consular questions, stay in India, investment and financial issues etc. The Centre is fully functional and successfully organized a Market Place during the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2008, in which many one-to-one Business meetings were organized on Investment and Infrastructure related Sectors.

Exploitation of workers in Gulf States

1482. MS. MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is exploitation of unskilled Indian workers in the Gulf States;

(b) the steps Government plans to rectify this situation; and

(c) whether there is some minimum wages entitlement by Indians?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Complaints are received from time to time regarding non/delayed payment of wages, poor living and working conditions, replacement of contracts etc. Action is taken on such complaints through the Indian Missions.

(b) Workers in the informal sector do not have the protection of labour law in the Gulf States. The Government has, therefore, made it mandatory that the labour contracts of unskilled workers are attested by the Indian Missions concerned before emigration clearance is granted to them. In order to ensure the protection and welfare of the Indian emigrant workers, the Ministry has been signing bilateral MoUs on Labour. In December, 2006 the Government signed an MoU with the UAE and in April, 2007 with Kuwait. In November 2007 an Additional Protocol with Qatar was signed to update the 1985 Agreement. MoUs are being finalized with Malaysia and Oman. MoUs are also being pursued with Bahrain and Yemen. These MoUs provide for protection of workers in the informal sector. Further, the MoUs provide resolution of bilateral labour issues through the mechanism of a Joint Working Group.

A number of Policy measures for the protection and welfare of emigrant workers are under implementation namely:—

1. Installation of a helpline for overseas Indian workers and potential emigrants;
2. Prescribing a minimum wage for women domestic workers;
3. Stipulation of a security deposit for a particular amount per worker from the foreign employer directly hiring any Indian worker;
4. Age restriction of 30 years to apply to all women emigrants holding ECR endorsed passports;
5. Compulsory attestation of Employment Contract by the Indian Missions;
6. Media campaign to educate potential women emigrants;

7. An Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) in important labour receiving countries to serve as a one-stop service outlet for emigrant workers;

8. The Indian Missions operate shelters for emigrants in distress including run-away women household service workers;

9. Engaging lawyers to defend the Indian emigrant workers in court cases of consequence;

10. A programme for skill upgradation of potential emigrants. The programme is being implemented in partnership with State Governments and Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. Industry Organisations and NGOs will also be involved in its implementation;

11. A pre-departure orientation programme for emigrants to equip them with the knowledge of laws, language and culture of the host countries before their departure.

(c) While a minimum wage has been prescribed for women household service workers, the Government has not prescribed a minimum wage for workers in other sectors.

Legal help to Indian women

1483. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRASEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is in the process of identifying non-Governmental organizations and legal teams to provide help to Indian women facing problems outside the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the assistance Government is giving to such women who are facing difficulties abroad?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government, through its Diplomatic Missions and Consular Posts abroad, has identified Indian Women's Organizations/Indian Community Associations/NGOs under a "Scheme for giving legal/financial assistance to women deserted by their overseas Indian spouses."

(b) The list of Indian Women's Organizations/Indian Community Associations/NGOs empanelled with the Indian Diplomatic Missions/Posts abroad is given in Statement I (*See* below).

(c) Financial assistance limited to US $ 1,000/- per case is provided through Indian Missions/Posts abroad to the Indian Women's Organizations/Indian Community Associations/ NGOs for providing legal aid to such women. Details of the scheme are given in the Statement [refer to the statement appended to Unstarred Question 1479(d)].